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Mr. Taft Also Tries His Hand

From the White House comes authoritative information that Mr. Taft, at the request of the President, has cabled four important amendments to the so-called covenant of the league of nations. The President is not formally committed to their acceptance, but it is understood that he approves of them in principle.

Thus ends one chapter. When the President, bearing the sacred instrument, made his hurried return, speaking at Boston and discussing a public question at a private dinner, the document was presented as practically unamendable—to be humbly received as written. When Senators criticised, the President flew into something akin to a rage. The constitutional convention, he held, had met and adjourned. He attacked his critics as blind and visionless. He openly threatened so to intertwine his project with the peace treaty proper as to make separate consideration impossible.

A change of mind is now revealed. Mr. Taft's advice is asked for, and Mr. Taft responds by forwarding amendments in many respects identical with the Lodge-Hughes amendments. The Monroe Doctrine is to be recognized; domestic matters are to be left, as now, within national jurisdiction; in the executive council there must be unanimity to pass anything; the agreement, so far as there is one, is to be limited in time, perhaps, to ten years, with a provision for witndrawal.

The Taft amendments are thus in substance the Lodge-Hughes amendments. There is a surface difference as to Article X, which freezes the *status quo* of the world by mutual guarantees of territorial integrity; but the difference is nominal rather than actual. If unanimity must precede action, if any delegate can prevent the doing of anything by voting "No," the guarantee is barren. Any nation would, of course, vote in the negative if disciplinary action against it were proposed, and then there would be no discipline.

Moreover, in connection with Article X, Mr. Taft has developed the extraordinary doctrine that the covenant creates no legal or moral obligation to act. In any particular case should this country refuse to proceed no breach of faith would occur, for it was to be presumed that all other nations took notice of the limitations of our Constitution, and thus knew in advance that we had pledged ourselves to nothing. This obviously reduces Article X, as well as the remainder of the covenant, to a nullity, with an obligation not even Pickwickian. It is as if a man, having agreed to pay a dollar, should say when a demand came: "My dear fellow, you knew I did not have a dollar; hence no duty rests on me to pay."

Mr. Taft, the excellence of whose intentions is commonly admitted, but whose habit to mix himself up is a severe trial to his admirers, is the head of a League to Enforce Peace; not to recommend peace, or to talk of its beauties or to act in concert if such is pleasing when war threatens, but to *enforce* it. His platform demands an international supreme court to decide justiciable questions, with a constable to enforce its judgments; an international parliament to enact international laws and to provide means to compel their acceptance, and an international executive, with a police force army at its command, able to require obedience to judgments and laws.

No man has more earnestly said these things were the minima of a league of peace worth the name. No man has been more emphatic in declaring that harm, rather than good, would be done by accepting a sham league. No man has more candidly recognized that the very nature of the peace problem required a setting up of a superstate, with a jurisdiction necessarily subtracting from national sovereignty. Now Mr. Taft, making a somersault, not only throws the weight of his influence for a sham, but takes a willing part in an effort in stripping the so-called covenant of any shreds of power that it contains.

A Benign Blizzard

It was not a wholly ill wind, after all, that unexpected March gale, for it blew clean away and out of existence several of the Coney Island balloons with which some ingenious mind saw fit to decorate our Victory Avenue. We should like to comprehend this Luna Park note in a great tribute to living and dead heroes. It pervades more than one spot. At Fifty-ninth Street there is a lovely Christmas tree piece, a sort of iridescent candy arch, flanked by some mysterious and very awful camouflage. At the Library one is reminded not so much of Coney Island as of the decorations in the cosey corner of any college boy's den. At Madison Square such vista from the south as the buildings permitted is blotted out in large part by the aforesaid balloons, or was so blotted out.

We had supposed that victory upon such a scale and at such a cost was a thing of dignity and some solemnity. But the designers of these decorations evidently thought otherwise. The columns lining the approach to the Victory Arch are topped with plaster aeroplanes, and what not. And above all are, or were, the balloons, round and gay and impudent. For the circus all this would have been perfect. For returning heroes, headed by the caisson for their dead comrades, it would have been hard to construct a more inappropriate blunder.

Let the wind do its work and let common sense complete the campaign! More power to the blizzard!

The Soldier Preferential

A protest filed by Dr. Manning and Major Thacher in behalf of the Home Auxiliary of the 77th Division brings out the discriminating features of the proposed soldiers' preference constitutional amendment.

To Spanish War veterans the preference is confined to those who enlisted from New York. Former soldiers of this class are thus protected from competition of incomers. Their privilege is "unwanted" and its value enhanced. But the preference to World War veterans is not confined to those enlisted from New York. Any World War veteran coming to New York is to have a priority right equal to that of those who were of New York when they enlisted.

The discrimination is obviously one to be removed. Those who put their lives in jeopardy in war should look alike to the lawmakers. If there is reason in one instance for confining preference to those entering service from New York there is reason in the other. The World War veterans, indeed, have a special claim, in view of the fact that a large part of them were conscripted—were not allowed to consider other obligations when a knock came on their door.

The issue raised by Dr. Manning and Major Thacher has, of course, no direct bearing on the larger question of whether there should be preference for any. The civil service organizations, holding coldly to the principle that the relation between a state and its employes is economic, and that one party buys and the other sells specific service, are naturally averse to any preference to any one on any ground. But not wholly without justification is the human feeling that the public service can be incidentally used to employ and to honor the public's protectors.

Few private employers, in fact, act solely according to the dictates of selfishness, saying so much pay for so much work. The man who has dared all would seem to be entitled to have the benefits of choice if the balance hangs level. It is inconsistent to tell private employers to remember the soldier, and then say that the public as an employer should in no way favor him. The government as a business agency may well be as human as business itself.

Private Ownership of Ships

Chairman Hurley of the Shipping Board is another who has studied government ownership, not as it ought to be, or might be if dreams were true, but as it is. The result is a square declaration by him for the sale of the great merchant marine fleet which the exigencies of war have led the public to create and its operation by coarse and selfish profit seekers—by that wicked and abandoned element of whom it seems improper to speak except in words of detestation.

The managers of most services are averse to the overthrow of the system with which they are identified. They are jealous of any lessening of their jurisdiction. This is the bureaucratic bias. But Mr. McAdoo found a year alone with the railroads quite enough and sought the hectic "movie" industry for quiet. Mr. Hurley discovers that eighteen months with government ships suffice him and prefers the noise of Chicago. Even Lenine, at last accounts, was trying to snare the bourgeoisie and induce them to relieve him of responsibility for Russian railroads and factories.

Mr. Hurley would sell the 16,000,000 tons of shipping the government has or has contracted for, on the basis of 25 per cent of the purchase price on delivery and 5 per cent interest on the deferred payments. Of the interest money 4 per cent is to recoup the Treasury for its bond obligation and the remaining 1 per cent converted into an emergency fund to meet deficits on routes not quickly paying but much needed.

The contention that America cannot compete in ship construction Mr. Hurley seems to dispose of. Likewise the argument that our shipmasters cannot operate because of higher labor costs. But there remains the bigger question of what cargoes the ships are to bring back, for ships with one-way cargoes cannot compete with ships having cargoes both ways. A corollary of exporting is importing. Yet the discussion is commonly on the assumption that we are to sell and not to buy. To have an efficient and profitable merchant marine a considerable change must occur in prevailing American views. Here is a problem Congress must consider when deciding about a shipping policy, and its decision will have a marked effect on the willingness to buy ships.

The Serajevo Mystery

Count Czernin's secret correspondence, soon to be published in English by the Committee on Public Information, will probably throw some light on the mystery of the Serajevo assassination. An Austrian priest wrote a pamphlet the other day charging that the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his Czech wife was the result of a plot hatched by representatives of the war party in Austria and Hungary. It is announced that the Czernin documents furnish no positive proof of the existence of such a conspiracy. But they are said to be full of details indicating a bitter hostility to the Archduke on the part of the Hungarian and German governments and the pro-German military clique in Vienna.

There was reason for this enmity. Francis Ferdinand had become in a sense a partisan of the Czechs and the South Slavs. He had in mind the creation of a triple Hapsburg monarchy. A Slav state was to be erected and admitted on an equality with Austria and Hungary. This project earned the heir apparent the hatred of the Hungarian oligarchy. It was obvious that Hungary's power would be destroyed by such a recasting of the empire. The Slavs loathed the Hungarians even more than they loathed the Austrians. And the creation of a Slav state would strip Hungary of Croatia and Slavonia and her access to the Adriatic. The Magyars would become a weak minority in the new triple combination.

Hungary had therefore turned to Germany for protection. It was an open secret before the war that the Magyar oligarchy was intriguing with Berlin and holding out promises of the election of one of William II's sons as King of Hungary. Francis Ferdinand knew of these negotiations. He distrusted William II and was openly at odds with him, just as he was at odds with the Vienna clique which controlled the senile Francis Joseph. He opposed war with Serbia and the fomentation of causes of dispute with the Serbians. He was consequently a most dangerous obstacle in the path of German policy in Southern Europe, a policy eagerly supported by Austro-Hungarian military men and statesmen.

It has been reported that in the spring of 1914, when Germany was already planning to precipitate a European war, William II sought a personal conference with Francis Ferdinand and tried to win him over to a programme of aggression in the Balkans. The Austrian heir apparent stood firm. Did he thereby sign his own death warrant?

Following this conference he was persistently urged to visit Serajevo. While there he received practically no protection from the police. Two attempts on his life were made on the same day—the second being successful. The assassin turned out to be a Bosnian Slav, and on evidence which could easily have been fabricated the Vienna government charged that he was influenced to commit the crime by anti-Austrian propagandist organizations in Serbia. The secrecy surrounding his trial and the leniency of his sentence excited grave suspicions. The heir apparent and his wife were contemptuously and hypocritically mourned in Vienna and Budapest. But their murder was joyously seized upon as a pretext for humbling and penalizing Serbia.

The Serajevo assassination has many of the earmarks of a Machiavellian conspiracy. It subtly served the purposes of those who wanted to start a world war. Were they responsible for it?

No detective story ever contained elements more dramatic in complication. And no other murder ever had such world-wide and incalculably tragic consequences.

Coöperative Industry

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: Having had experience on the labor end from the bench and machine to superintendency, and on the capital end from manager to ownership, I have given considerable thought to the question as to what would be a fair division of the earnings of a corporation between labor and capital, and the following plan appeals to my sense of justice from both points of view:

Pay to capital a fixed rate of interest and then divide equally between capital and labor excess earnings. Let capital be protected by a preferred accumulative and participating share of stock, and labor by common shares of stock. The preferred shares to be issued at par to paying subscribers, the common shares to be held in the treasury and issued at par in accordance with earnings tributary to the common stock. After preferred dividends shall have been paid, one-half of the surplus fund shall be used for the purchase of common stock at par, from the treasury, and said stock be placed in escrow for the benefit of the working organization until the escrow stock shall equal in amount the issued preferred shares. This escrowed common stock shall be paid a dividend from the subsequent earnings of the company, and a like amount in total shall be paid to the preferred shares as an extra dividend. The dividend on the escrow shares shall, when earned, be distributed to the labor organization pro rata on regular dividend dates. GEORGE W. HOADLEY.

New York, March 26, 1919.

That It Has a Senate, for Instance

(From The Washington Post)

Anyhow, Woodrow and other Parisians are learning some of the peculiarities of the United States government.

The Conning Tower

CALVERLEY'S "ODE TO TOBACCO"

[Printed for the benefit of the Anti-Cigarette League]

Thou, who when fears attack,
Bidst them avaunt, and Black
Care, at the horseman's back
Perching, unseatest;
Sweet when the morn is gray;
Sweet, when they've cleared away
Lunch; and at close of day
Possibly sweetest:

I have a liking old
For thee, though manifold
Stories, I know, are told,
Not to thy credit;
How one (or two at most)
Drops make a cat a ghost—
Useless, except to roast—
Doctors have said it:

How they who use fusees
All grow by slow degrees
Brainless as chimpanzees,
Meagre as lizards:
Go mad, and beat their wives;
Plunge (after shocking lives)
Razors and carving-knives
Into their gizzards.

Confound such knavish tricks!
Yet know I five or six
Smokers who freely mix
Still with their neighbors;
Jones—(who, I'm glad to say,
Asked leave of Mrs. J.)—
Daily absorbs a clay
After his labors.

Cats may have had their goose
Cooked by tobacco-juice;
Still why deny its use
Thoughtfully taken?
We're not as tabbies are;
Smith, take a fresh cigar!
Jones, the tobacco-jar!
Here's to thee, Bacon!

Among the things we never would have learned in our youth,—a youth many afternoons of which were consecrated to "blowing" cigarette pictures for keeps,—if it hadn't been for cigarettes, were what the flag of Ecuador looked like, the personableness of Miss Anne Sutherland and Miss Vernona Jarbeau, the appearance of Spokane and Proctor Knott, and the faces of Mike Kelly the ballplayer and Jake Kilrain the scrapper.

THE DIARY OF OUR OWN SAMUEL PEPYS

March 26—Last night with A. Samucls to hear "The Mikado," and J. De Angelis was Ko-Ko, and O. Harrold Nanki-Poo, and I thought they did poorly; and I liked only Mistress Gladys Caldwell, who hath grace and a pretty way of saying her words, as though she knew what they meant; and even W. Danforth as The Mikado I thought overdid his effect of maliciousness, in which he hath skill, but which loseth, meseems, its comick effect when too much insisted upon. With N. Levy the barrister to lunch, and we talked of the League of Nations, and of drinking, and of what would happen if we drank all the mixed drinks upon the cards, and how far we could go—a poor turn for the talk to take, for a drinking bout might come of it. To dinner with my wife, and read this evening "A Short History of Discovery," by H. W. van Loon, and he drew the pictures, too; and it is for children, but I enjoyed it mightily, far more than Barnes's "A Short History of the United States," that I was forced to study as a lad.

27—For a ride in my petrol-waggon with my wife, and we went to see Mary Black, that was handmaiden to us in the old days, and her little daughter Ruth. To the office, where all day, and there is discussion about the campaign against tobacco; and I think it may be a good thing, to shew us the hypocrisy of our way of living. To my room, and labored all evening at my scrivening. Read through L. Untermeyer's new book, "The New Era in American Poetry," filled with good criticism and much enthusiasm.

28—Up betimes, and to the office, and watched the snow falling, so fascinating that I could not work; and put off doing my stint until evening, and then did it in a hurry.

When the Chicago Tribune says of Mr. Walter Lippmann that he "remained snugly at home during a war which was certainly as close to being a war for internationalism as could be expected in this imperfect world," the thought occurs to us that untruth is one of the three or eight things that help to make the world imperfect. Mr. Lippmann, it happens, resigned his position on the New Republic shortly after our entry into the war, and remained, far from snugly, in Washington, doing work that the President, at least, considered important. In July, 1918, Captain Lippmann, U. S. A., went to France, and returned last month.

Marse Henry, in the current instalment of "Looking Backward," quotes Raymond as saying, "But for the love of Mike, don't whisper it." Could Raymond, sixty years ago, have said that? Is the locution as old as that? We are asking for info.

"Mark Twain and I," Mr. Watterson continues, "grew up on old wives' tales of estates and titles, which, maybe due to a kindred sense of humor in both of us, we treated with shocking irreverence." If we ever doubted that Marse Henry was a typical American, that doubt has vanished. The t. A. always admits he has a sense of humor.

The Winter Garments of Repentance

Sir: Speaking of preparedness, now that the war is over, you may be interested to learn that overcoats were issued last week to the nurses at the Army Hospital on Ellis Island. We can all feel assured that the girls will be well protected against the snows of spring. Besides, who can tell what weather June and July may bring?

G. Loom.

President Wilson could save cable tolls by eliminating "very." Two of them appear in the first sentence of his cable of March 27, and there is one in the third paragraph. Our offer still stands of one very good cigar to anybody who cites an instance of "very" strengthening an adjective.

Opponents Gain On Clemenceau.—Evening Sun.

Late last night they had the ball on his 15-yard line, but he was expecting a fumble.

The Anti-Cigarette League, according to one of its members, is rolling up a tidal wave of opposition to tobacco.

It rolls its own, perhaps. E. P. A.

Our American Bolshevists

Louise Bryant—Self-Made Martyr

Unsuspecting Senators Helped John Reed's Wife Mount the Pillory

By Stanley Frost

MISS BRYANT made a most fetching martyr for the Bolshevist uplift when she appeared before the Overman Committee. She is pretty; she is small, and looks helpless; she has big, appealing, violet eyes, and she has a voice that registers charmingly either the throaty sob of suffering under abuse or the sharp ring of indignant protest.

She is clever, also. She came to be a martyr, and she not only seized and made the utmost of every chance that was offered her, but she even goaded the Senators into helping her rôle—"feeding," I believe, is the theatrical term that fits. Of course, Senators are fair game for any one, and perhaps they were particularly easy game for her kind of attack. They move and sit hedged about with honor and deference; how could they suspect that pretty impudence and insouciant contempt were carefully calculated to lead them to censorious speech? They spoke as she desired.

The cause has long needed a martyr. Mooney does very well in Europe, but there is too much suspicion of brutal murder about him to make a wide appeal in America. Berkman and Emma Goldman are worn out as martyrs, and besides the country is almost unanimously against them and all others who really obstructed us in the war. Some one else had to be found, and who could be better than a nice, young, pretty woman? Especially if the martyrdom would not hurt? Miss Bryant did good work—the revolutionary press is still talking about the "witch-burning Overman Committee."

A Silk Stockinged Proletarian

Miss Bryant—she would call herself Mrs. John Reed if she used her legal name—has long been an active parlor Bolshevist. She wears silk stockings, and in no way looks proletarian. One suspects that she bathes daily. But she spoke and wrote widely for the cause even before she offered herself as its martyr. She came before the committee frankly as a propagandist and spoke over the shoulders of the Senators to prospective converts beyond.

One need not doubt her sincerity or her idealism, though one may perhaps suspect that her loyalty goes to the cause rather than to any abstract reverence for facts. But, passing that question, there can be found in her testimony a remarkable picture of what may be called the parlor Bolshevist mind.

This is not a mind turning to revolution and all its horrors because of the smart of its own intolerable sufferings, but it is one that is quite willing to risk those horrors for the sake of trying on the world its own pet panacea. Raymond Robins declared that this type of mind did not really visualize the horrors it was invoking, and recanted when they appeared. At any rate, this type of mind is willing to consider revolution—so much of it as it can see—a small thing to wager on its own wisdom.

Miss Bryant's mind showed first a confident superiority over all who disagreed with her. "I know more about it than any other witness who has been here," she declared, though she had left Russia after only ten weeks of Bolshevik rule and there had been witnesses who had suffered a year of it and came from the inside of Bolshevik prisons. "You were not there and I was," she flared up at an embarrassing question by Senator Overman. "Breshkovsky is an old lady with a glorious past and a pitiful present," she declared when confronted with the fact that the life-long revolutionist disagreed with some of her statements.

Miss Bryant has faith in revolution as a god that can do no wrong. She admitted that she knew nothing, except from Bolshevik reports, as to conditions in Russia for more than a year. But "that is not true," she said of the charge that there are Germans in the soviets. "I don't know," she admitted a minute later, "but I can imagine it is not true."

The Aesthetic Executioner

She denied that Peters, the Petrograd executioner, is cruel. She was challenged. "I do not know," she admitted. "But I know how he felt about it. He was not that sort of a man. He told me so himself. He was a very æsthetic young man."

"I do not think you can say the soviets are in favor of Germany," she said at another time. "Because by all logic they cannot be." She denied that the central soviet forced elections in others. "I know the principle it is founded on and it does not permit that." "No, they could not change the principle." "It does not work that way." "I know the application."

As to the nationalization of women: "I am sure it is not correct. How could it be?"

And on atrocities: "The Bolshevik guards did not take people out in fifties and shoot them. They would not, because they are not organized against the people." This in the face of Tchitcherin's admission of killing 500 in one batch.

She showed a curious attitude of mind on suffering. "Just the ordinary things that go with civil war and with fighting," she said of atrocities and starvation.

Miss Bryant's opinion of shoes depends on who wears them. She was eloquent against the use of force by the Allies in Russia. "I demand self-determination for Russia," she declared. But she had no objection to forcible Bolshevist domination.

Soviet Force Justifiable

"Is not the Soviet government attempting to establish itself by force?" Senator Nelson asked.

"Oh, yes! All governments do."

"And by force against the Russian people who do not agree with them?"

"Yes, we did that against the King of England."

"Why shouldn't the rest of the Russian people have the right to express themselves? Why should the Bolshevists use force and disarm everybody?"

"Oh, that is the way revolutions are brought about."

"Then you believe in self-determination at the point of a gun?"

"All things have to be self-determined at the point of a gun."

Yet she maintained quite calmly, and within a few minutes, that the Russians were not disarmed, that the soviets did not rule by terror and that the whole mass of the Russian people were backing the experiment!

Finally Miss Bryant proved herself unwilling to make a flat statement regarding her purposes for America. Senator Wolcott asked whether she had supported the soviet form of government in her public speeches. Miss Bryant launched into a diatribe on the evils of prejudice and the hostile atmosphere she had found. He repeated the question. She explained that the soviet had been lied about. Again he repeated. She changed the form of the question: "Do you mean that I ask to have a soviet in America? I am not advocating anything of the kind. "The Senator gave up on the first question and tried to get a real answer on the one she herself had stated. Miss Bryant said it was a shame to have American boys killed in Russia. He tried again. She declared that each country should be allowed to work out its own form of government. He repeated. She did not see how a soviet could be established here. Once more he asked whether she favored soviet government for America. "I do not think it would fit America at the present time," she replied, and he gave up.

Established as a Martyr

Just at the close Miss Bryant came back suddenly to her martyr pose and made a direct attack on the committee. She charged that it was hearing one side only, that it was not trying to get the truth, that it abused people who took the other side, though she refused to specify. This speech was not spoiled by the fact that the committee, as planned, afterward heard other pro-Bolshevists. It gave a splendid basis for editorials in the pro-Bolshevist press, and Miss Bryant left the stand in triumph, a "martyr" fighting for a "martyred cause."

So here is a parlor-Bolshevist mind in action on a big stage, the mind of one of the leaders of the propaganda, of one of those who shriek their demand that they be chosen guides for blind senators and others. Such is the "reasoning" which is attempted. But if it does not convince, behold! here is a martyr, and a charming one! With sympathy and gallantry alike to reinforce the plea, how can one inquire too closely whether it is fair or truthful or whether the purposes are good either for Russia or America?

Upstate Parents Bitter

The Hylan Committee Accused of Delaying Parade Tickets

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: Yesterday New York paid homage to the heroes of the 27th Division. The victory parade must have been an inspiration to every citizen of this great state privileged to witness the final public appearance of this glorious military body.

As the boys marched up Fifth Avenue I imagine some of them felt a peculiar pride as they passed the grandstand, for mother and father or some of the home folks were to see them! But what a disappointment—not only to the parents, who also passed through the valleys and the shadows in all the dark hours of the world conflict, but to the boys themselves—when they realize, as they now do, that their parents and the home folks were actually robbed of the privilege of seeing the parade.

Three of our sons are to-day in the service of their country—two in the infantry and one in the Red Cross. They were among the very first to volunteer. Two of them went away with the 108th Regiment of the 27th Division. One is still with the regiment; the other, having earned a commission, was transferred to the 1st Division and is now with the army of occupation. We are proud of their record and we are glad that we had them to give, to die for their country if need be.

To witness the triumphant return of the boys was the one great desire of their mother. There was early promise that the desire would be gratified, for it was announced on the sacred honor of the Mayor's Committee of New York that every soldier would be provided with two tickets for seats in the reviewing stand set apart for the parents of the boys of the 27th Division. There is no question in my mind that the tickets were allotted.

But our tickets were received at 2:30 o'clock this afternoon, together with this note:

"With the compliments of Mayor Hylan I am inclosing two tickets for the reviewing stand for the parade of the 27th Division.

"(Signed) GROVER A. WHALEN,
"Secretary."

Across the face of the tickets is printed in red ink these significant words: "Seats will be reserved only until 9:30 a. m."

As the letter bore a postmark dated New York, March 24, 4 p. m., the public may judge the real intent of those responsible for the distribution. JOHN W. BAKER.

Ithaca, N. Y., March 25, 1919.

Mr. Beck and His Enemies

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I am not an American, but I resent to the depths this constant tirade of abuse against James M. Beck, one of America's noblest sons, standing for the same high type of Americanism that the great and late Colonel Roosevelt stood for, and at the same time ever demonstrating a true, loyal friendship for the Allies across the sea. May we continue to honor Mr. Beck as he so richly deserves, and yet any and all honors only speak in a small way the depth of our appreciation.

EMILY V. LORRAINE.

New York, March 22, 1919.

Defends War Risk Bureau

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I sympathize with the writer of the letter signed "Sergeant" in to-day's Tribune. I don't blame him for being irritated. Perhaps under the circumstances he is excusable for errors of observation and of statement. But his assertion that the Bureau of War Risk Insurance is "a large building, full of people doing nothing, nothing, nothing" so misrepresents the bureau and does such injustice to my fellow workers in the bureau that I cannot let it go uncontradicted.

As almost any one of the thirteen buildings in which the "War Risk" is housed might be termed large, I cannot be sure to which one of them he refers. It is probable, however, that his inquiries took him to the division of allotments and allowances, in the New National Museum Building, in which 3,500 employes of the bureau work. I have worked there for nearly a year. My duties take me into almost every section of it daily. I speak from knowledge when I say that steady, hard work is the rule. Piles of work rise on the desks as fast as they are demolished. Regulations are rigid. Moments of relaxation are few. I worked for a few weeks last summer in the Division of Accounts. What I have said of allotments and allowances holds good of accounts. I have no reason to think it is not equally true of the whole bureau.

In the allotments and allowances division we deal primarily with "applications," the forms filled out by the soldiers when making their allotments of pay to their families and asking for the government allowances. The greater part of the work is necessarily specialized. It would be ideal if each case could have a "godmother" to see that no mistakes were made and that difficulties arising through no fault of the bureau were adjusted speedily as possible. But there would be several million godmothers falling over one another in their efforts, and then there would be a few things, after all, that would have to await the attention of an expert awarder of the adjutant general's office or of a commanding officer in France. So one clerk files a case, another reads a letter written about it, a third makes a change of address, a fourth sends a form letter on it, a fifth, perhaps, makes an amended award or a stop payment, a sixth dictates a letter, and a seventh examines it to see that all is done right. Thousands and thousands of such tasks are done conscientiously and correctly every day.

The Bureau of War Risk Insurance is a vast and complicated machine. It is beyond my province as an employe to discuss it generally. I have the right, however, to tell the public what I know to be the fact—that criticism implying that employes of the bureau do not give the government and the people good return for what they are paid is a libel.

If the public, including "Sergeant," could see us struggling to give this service among discomforts and inconveniences manifold (from which we expect soon to be relieved by removal to our new building), they would be slower to write letters like this. In the winter of 1917-'18 women worked over the market in a hall so cold that they wore coats, furs, caps, gloves and overshoes at their desks. Last summer they worked in cruel heat, often kept awake at night by the heat in rooms where three, four and five were crowded in together. I saw them now and then faint at the files. But they stuck to their work till they did faint.

It becomes me less to speak of the difficulties or the achievements of the searching force, but we walk miles a day on the stone floors of the Museum, and some of us certainly do detective work in untangling "snarly" cases. We searchers in the special correspondence section have little to make us optimistic. We deal only with cases in which payments have been delayed or checks have gone astray. We carry burdens of poverty, illness, death, for seven hours a day, six days a week. As we trail an elusive application from section to section or read a bunch of documents half an inch thick, we mentally picture the woman, shawl on head or baby in arms, turning in disappointment from the mail box at the cross roads or at the tenement house door because that looked-for government envelope has not come. We know just what it means to the woman and to the baby, and we do our level best to find out the trouble and to get the check off as quickly as possible. We work just as hard to clear up questions of checkage, so that men listed for discharge can get home.

It is well both for us and for the public to remember that for every case of delayed payment there are hundreds of awards running smoothly. If testimony to this is needed it is found in the frequent plaint to the bureau: "I don't see why I don't get my allotment when all the other women round here are getting theirs regular."

KATHARINE FISHER.

Washington, D. C., March 23, 1919.

The Turkey as a Warrior

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: We note your recent reference to the saying of Franklin that the turkey and not the eagle should have been the national emblem. Had the turkey been selected in the place of the eagle he would have been no disgrace, even in a rough and tumble. Some years ago a turkey hen and her brood were feeding in a field near our barns, with the big gobbler on the watch, when with a rush a big bald eagle launched himself upon them. While the hen hid the young turkeys the gobbler faced the music. The eagle came straight for him. Just as the eagle closed, the turkey side-stepped. Again and again the eagle swooped, only to find his rush where the turkey had been.

The eagle then lit and tried mixing it on the ground. But here he was outclassed by the superior footwork and great strength of his opponent. How a finish fight would have resulted we do not know, as, unfortunately, one of the men, rushing out from the barn, frightened the eagle away. But the gobbler did not have a scratch on him, and you might have heard him swear for half a mile. He could lick any eagle that ever flew. A true incident, save possibly the swearing. He did not speak good English, but I know that was what he meant.

JOHN KERR.

Franklin, N. Y., March 16, 1919.

The Finest View

(From The Philadelphia Public Ledger)

No scenery in the Rhineland ever compared with a close-up view of my old home